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SKILLBUILDING TECHNIQUES FOR ACCURATE SPEED SHOOTING- ADVANCED

Purpose: This training section will further develop an enhanced set of stress-resistant and durable trigger control skills through the combined use of guided imagery and dry-firing exercises. These skills will be tested in an objective, scored tactical firing exercise emphasizing precision shooting on multiple, partially-covered assailants at close to moderate range using the service handgun.

Justification for the development of effective speed shooting skill is obvious: Accurate speed shooting is fundamental to officer survival and public safety; poor skills place both the officer and citizens at unacceptable risk.

Lecture notes:

1) FUNDAMENTALS FOREVER

Let's recap the fundamentals of marksmanship:

grip (a stable platform supporting the pistol throughout aiming, firing and recovery)

hold (the target area *-not* "point"- within which the pistol is aimed)

sight alignment (information needed to verify aim and cue shot)

trigger press (trigger control is a process coordinated with sight picture leading to a controlled shot, versus an uncontrolled "NOW!" impulse to grab at the shot once everything lines up...)

follow through and recovery (physically passive, unconscious response to recoil with simultaneous, visually active recovery of sight alignment as the pistol is allowed to function and return to POA)

CLOSE-RANGE SHOOTING ERRORS, in descending order:

Flinching...we all do it, but nobody would admit it to Mom.

Recoil anticipation...our inner drive to control everything

Trigger jerk...the "NOW!" impulse

Improper sight picture...or none at all

2) SIGHTING

Notice that sighting errors are lowest on the list of potential causes for misses. Perhaps 90% of all shooting errors can be attributed to a combination of hold and trigger control factors; everyone can hold within a torso-sized area at moderate distances. **A shooter's 'wobble zone' is always smaller than the group they can actually shoot at a given distance.** Non-sighting errors are the reason.

The shot is cued by the appearance of an **acceptable sight picture** on the target. What constitutes an acceptable sight picture varies by target distance, the aiming area presented and the time available to make the shot. For example, shooting while moving necessitates an acceptance of a coarser sight picture; shooting at very close range might require only that the pistol be silhouetted against the target area, or no sight picture at all. Since **angular misalignment of the sights to each other compounds itself by the square of the distance to the target**, a long or very precise shot requires a more perfect, classic sight picture for success.

3) TRIGGER CONTROL EQUATION

RELEASE AND RESET- a pistol without a disconnecter is a submachine gun. The "click" you hear and feel on reset is the trigger mechanism recapturing the sear, present in all semiauto pistols.

A shooter may fire as fast as he can release and reset the trigger, but only as accurately as he can smoothly press through the next shot and follow through. The technique used to accomplish this is called the **compressed break**.

From the standpoint of reliability, **positive trigger reset** is a very critical survival skill which insures that the pistol will fire each time the trigger is pulled. (Short-stroking is the result of poor trigger reset skills.) As such, it's half of the trigger control equation.

TRIGGER PRESS- For a shot to be accurate and effective, it must be fired by a smooth trigger press which does not disturb the sights as they are held in the target area. **An acceptable trigger press is determined by the same factors which constitute an acceptable sight picture:** distance to the target, the aiming area presented and time available to make the shot. However, every shot, no matter how "easy" it may appear, requires a minimum quality of trigger press for a successful hit. Combatants commonly miss each other at conversational distances. **Of all the aspects involved in drawing, presenting and firing the service pistol, the actual trigger press takes the least amount of time.** The time difference between a controlled **compressed break** versus an uncontrolled jerk of the trigger is negligible; the real difference is simply one of technique and training. The compressed break is the other half of the trigger control equation, both sides of which are equally important in reliably delivering accurate fire at speed. (This is in reference to the single action trigger phase of a DA/SA pistol as well as SA-only and safe-action handguns.)

COMPRESSED BREAK- Simply put, the compressed break is a controlled, even mashing of the trigger in a straight line to the rear which continues throughout the shot, recoil and recovery. That's all it is. It's **not** a sudden, instantaneous jerk that makes the shot happen "NOW!". Rather, the compressed break is much like firing a child's squirtgun, with even pressure and trigger / finger movement throughout the stroke. Continuing this pressure throughout the shot is critical to **followthrough**.

PACE SHOOTING- **The trigger should be pressed and released / reset at the same pace and speed.** This pace will vary by the same factors as before: distance, target area and movement. Experience will determine the fastest pace a shooter can attain for a given target, while dry firing drills will develop and reinforce that pace as an element of trigger control skill.

TRIGGER 'PREP'- Competitive shooters typically 'prep' the trigger between shots, meaning they aggressively take up the trigger pretravel and slack between shots in an effort to minimize the time and movement necessary to fire the next accurate shot. This is not a valid survival technique and is to be discouraged; **the finger must always be off the trigger unless actively engaging a threat target.** Use of the compressed break technique allows for accurate fire without having to 'prep' the trigger.

4) DRY FIRE EXERCISE

Learning goal: Emphasize development of subconscious trigger control skills by repetition of dry fire and reset with visualization. The exercise simulates trigger reset and compressed break finger manipulations without the distractions and pressures associated with live fire.

Ex. A: 50-50 RESET DRILL

Safety note: ALL ammunition must be cleared from the firearm, magazines, person and space during any dry fire exercise. The range training officer shall verify that all firearms are fully unloaded and all ammo is safely stowed in a separate area before beginning this exercise.

Procedure: The shooter will be seated in a comfortable and reasonably relaxed posture, holding the unloaded pistol in a safe direction with the slide down and the hammer cocked (if applicable) in his/her normal, two-handed grip. The shooter will perform this exercise with his / her eyes closed, visualizing targets as called forth by the instructor.

1) Press the trigger in a controlled, slow and smooth manner, focusing on making a straight rearward motion of the trigger. The pace of this compressed break should coincide with a normal exhalation. Then, while holding the trigger to the rear, manually cycle the slide to recock the hammer (if applicable) and resume the two-handed grip. Release and reset the trigger at the same slow pace of a normal inhalation. Repeat at will for a full ten minutes. (Note: the instructor should not permit excessive chatter, and students should be striving for getting an intimate "feel" for their trigger mechanism's reset and press action.)

2) Continue the drill, accelerating to a two-second pace for each element. Emphasize breathing in on the press, out on the reset stroke. (Note: the instructor should watch for and encourage slow, methodical trigger manipulation throughout.) This should take another five minutes.

3) Continue the drill, accelerating to a one-second pace for each element. The instructor will count out the pace, again looking for smooth manipulation and "dead" hammer falls. 3 minutes.

4) Continue the drill, with the instructor now calling forth target scenarios for the students to visualize engaging at varying, controlled paces. I.E.: "30-yards! Slow reset, surprise break!" with the students following his spoken tempo. 5 minutes to conclusion.

Wrap-up: The students should be encouraged to verbally describe the feel of their particular pistol's trigger action using analogies relevant to them. Students are encouraged to continue training with this method independently, in strict observance of safety procedures. The instructor is required to document the attendance and circumstances of instruction for this section per applicable policy.

Comments: